

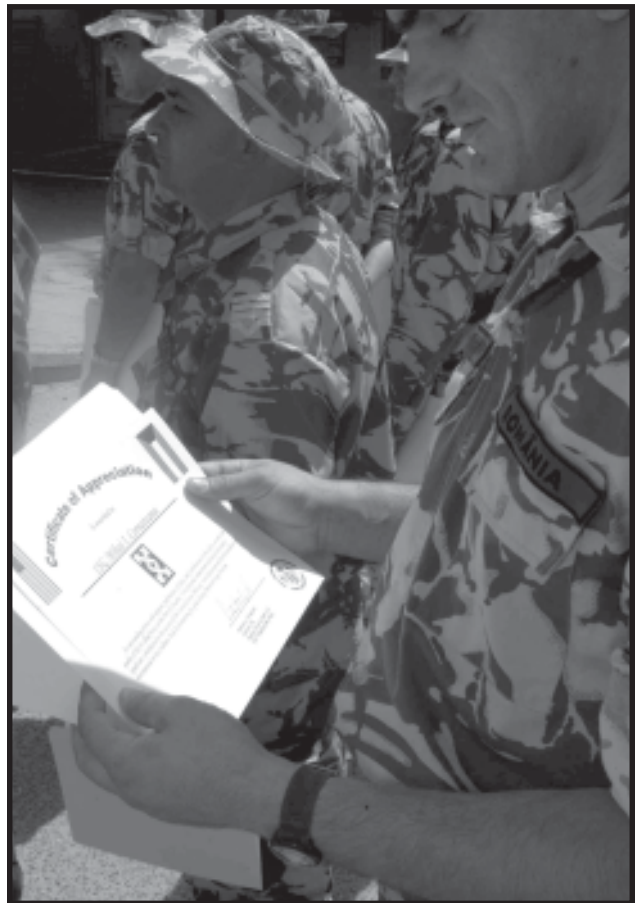
Romanians Get “Perfect 10” for Coalition NBC Performance

By Staff Sergeant Thomas N. Orme

Standing in formation in the morning Kuwaiti sun, about 40 soldiers from the 383d Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) Defense Company, Bistrita, Romania, accepted certificates from the 143d Transportation Command, Orlando, Florida, for an outstanding job of washing more than 30,000 containers and vehicles, preparing them for redeployment.

The Romanian NBC unit arrived in theater eight days before the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003. The 383d, part of the Romanian 81st Mechanized Brigade, numbered about 50 originally, but about 20 new soldiers were added before coming to Kuwait. For the first two months in theater, the Romanians worked as part of the Combined Joint Task Force consequence management operations at Camp Doha, Kuwait, alongside German, Czech, Slovak, and Ukrainian NBC units. The Romanians brought 38 vehicles to Kuwait: NBC trucks that could haul 4 tons of water, jeeps, 380-volt-generator trucks, 5-ton trucks, decontamination trucks, and armored personnel carriers (APCs). They also had an NBC reconnaissance platoon with four APCs, in addition to a logistical platoon and a maintenance platoon.

In May, the unit began its redeployment mission with the 143d at Port Shuaiba, Kuwait. Vehicles had to be sterile before they could be redeployed. Dirt, mud, beehives, and vegetation had to be removed. Cleaning the containers is mandated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture because baked-on dirt



A Romanian soldier looks over his certificate, given by a grateful 143d Transportation Command for help with redeployment operations.



A Romanian soldier cleans a container at the wash point at Port Shuaiba, Kuwait.

might contain bacteria or hide Mediterranean fruit flies that can cause billions of dollars of agricultural damage if they are brought into the United States and allowed to multiply.

The 143d Transportation Command built wash racks, but both the containers (typically 20- or 40-foot standard military vans) and the vehicles needed to be cleaned. The 383d NBC team could provide this service 24/7, so the 143d set up a wash point at the port so that the Romanian soldiers could perform rinse-down operations for containers and vehicles. The Romanians worked 12-hour shifts and cleaned an average of 300 containers per day. They used the rough-terrain cargo handler (RTCH, which is pronounced *wretch* and is similar to a large forklift) to pick up the containers and wash them. The Americans cleaned the taller vehicles by standing on a bridge.

At the container wash point, the U.S. military police (who were certified as customs border clearance agents by U.S. Customs and Border Protection) examined the containers and checked for security seals, forms, and “trackers”—devices which can be attached to containers to emit a signal that can be tracked by a Global Positioning System receiver. Some of the truck convoys arriving at the point were more than 1/2-mile long with 200 containers that

required about 12 hours to clean. If a container did not pass inspection, it was moved to the “frustrated cargo” area until the problem was corrected.

The same day the unit received its certificates, the first of approximately 700 more Romanian soldiers and their equipment arrived at Port Shuaiba. The force, which included military police, engineers, and infantrymen, immediately moved to Iraq to assist coalition forces in ongoing Operation Iraqi Freedom missions.